

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 917

TM 870 551

AUTHOR Cooney, Margaret
TITLE Networking Evaluation: A Creative Approach to Assessment.
PUB DATE Dec 86
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperation; *Evaluation Methods; Group Dynamics; Group Experience; *Group Testing; Higher Education; Interpersonal Communication; *Network Analysis; *Participative Decision Making; Problem Solving; *Student Evaluation; Student Reaction; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS *Networking Evaluation

ABSTRACT

This paper describes networking evaluation, an alternative to traditional evaluation, in which students work cooperatively in small groups to solve specific problems and are evaluated collectively by their teacher. Steps in the networking evaluation model are: (1) explaining the networking concept to students and preparing them for the evaluation; (2) preparing comprehensive questions for the networking evaluation; (3) dividing students into groups of four or five, balancing verbal and non-verbal participants in each group; (4) giving the group assignment, networking instructions and assessment questions to students at the time of the evaluation; (5) assessing the group by reviewing their outlines of their answers to the presented questions and audio or video tapes of the process itself; and (6) assigning individual grades to the groups' members. The teacher may also choose to have the students evaluate fellow group members on participation, cooperation and contribution. This would also be taken into account in assigning individual grades. Graduate students at California State University at San Bernardino noted that this procedure reduced their test anxiety and improved their self-confidence. If used in training programs in the helping professions, the evaluation process itself becomes a relevant learning experience. (JGL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED286917

NETWORKING EVALUATION:

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

by Margaret Cooney, Ph.D., CRC
Coordinator of Rehabilitation Counseling Programs
California State University, San Bernardino

December 1986

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Margaret H. Cooney

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TM 870 551

NETWORKING EVALUATION: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

During the 1985 academic year, the author developed a networking evaluation model for graduate students in the School of Education at California State University, San Bernardino. This evaluation model is an alternative to traditional static evaluation. A pilot project of networking evaluation experiences were conducted with five different classes of graduate students to validate the model's concepts. Student feedback was very favorable. The students stated that networking evaluation was a positive assessment experience which helped them synthesize key concepts, share knowledge, and make critical decisions. The purpose of this paper is to present the model of networking evaluation, student reactions to the model, and ways that it can be facilitated in the classroom.

What is a Network?

According to John Naisbitt (1984), networks are people talking to each other, sharing ideas, information, and resources. The point is often made that networking is a verb. The important part is not the network, the finished product, but the process of getting there — the communication that creates linkages between clusters of people. Although sharing information and ideas is the main purpose, networks can go beyond the transfer of data to the creation and exchange of knowledge. As each person in a network takes in a new information, they synthesize it and develop new ideas. Networks share these newly forged thoughts and ideas. (Naisbitt, 1984)

Applying networking to assessment may be considered a dynamic measure of creative functioning. The networking evaluation model is a group approach to assessment which may be contrasted with a traditional, static or product-oriented approach. Educators usually use the pyramid structure to organize their educational and assessment procedures. Communication, instruction and power flow from the pyramid's top, down to the base; from the principal to the teacher; from the teacher to the student. During traditional assessment procedures, students compete against

each other for high grades under duress of test anxiety. In networking evaluations, the teacher and students communicate together in a horizontal mode to achieve common goals. Networking evaluation is a group approach to assessment where students share information and knowledge in a relaxed atmosphere. The networking evaluation model may be adapted to educational levels from junior high school through graduate school. The model seems particularly appropriate to disciplines fostering communication and integration of diverse areas of knowledge such as social sciences, business, helping professions, and education.

The students who participated in the networking evaluation experiences at CSUSB found this form of assessment to be a positive learning experience which reduced test anxiety. The students stated they were not worrying about solving problems on their own during the assessment. Networking evaluation encourages students to share knowledge and solve test questions as a group. Some students felt that the networking evaluation helped them make practical transitions from theory to real life situations.

The teacher who wishes to engage in networking evaluation needs to have basic training and experience in group dynamics. The teacher should also have knowledge about the dynamics of the networking process. Prior to conducting a networking assessment, the teacher discusses the concepts of networking evaluation with the students in their class. The teacher informs students that it will be important for them to work effectively in small groups in order to successfully complete the evaluation. The actual steps in the networking evaluation model are presented below.

Networking Evaluation Model

1. Explain networking concept and prepare students for the evaluation:

It is important for students to understand that during the networking evaluation they will share information, knowledge and work together to achieve common goals. The teacher discusses the importance of students preparing well for the evaluation so that they can make valuable individual contributions to the group networking process. The teacher gives students a list of study questions which they should individually answer prior to the networking evaluation. By answering the study questions, students will be prepared to engage in group discussion and help group members formulate creative answers.

2. Prepare comprehensive questions for the networking evaluation:

The teacher prepares one to three global, comprehensive questions which will motivate group discussion and encourage convergent, divergent, creative, and evaluative thinking. One question used during a career counseling evaluation is as follows:

"Your group has been asked to develop the curriculum and programs for a high school career center. Discuss various programs the center will offer to students. Finally, discuss how you will utilize teacher and community members in the center's program."

Another question used in a teacher education course could be:

"Your group has been asked to develop a three-hour workshop on discipline for junior high school teachers. In your answer, discuss specific discipline problems teachers may encounter with junior high school students. Also, discuss creative strategies teachers may utilize to effectively handle such discipline problems."

3. Divide the students into small groups:

Before networking evaluation, the teacher divides students into small groups of 4 to 5 participants. A balance should be created between verbal and non-verbal students to form a heterogeneous group.

4. Students receive group assignments, networking instructions and assessment questions at the scheduled evaluation time:

When the students come to the class for the networking evaluation, the teacher appoints a leader and recorder for each group as well as goes over the assessment instructions. The recorder's responsibility is to write down the group's formulated answers in an outline form. In addition, all group experiences will be audio-taped or video-taped. The instructions direct students to read and think about each question. Furthermore, students are directed to discuss all of the possible answers to a question and then develop one organized answer reflecting the group's decisions. Students will need to be reminded of time as they become involved in group problem solving. Teachers may visit groups during the evaluation process to clarify questions, procedures, etc.

5. Teacher's assessment of networking evaluation:

The teacher will evaluate the answers from each group by reviewing the tape recordings and written outlines. The teacher may also elect to have students evaluate members in their group by evaluating each other on participation, cooperation, and contribution. This student evaluation has proven to be a motivating procedure.

6. Teacher assignment of individual grades:

The teacher assigns individual grades for the evaluation by reviewing the individual student's contribution to the group process and the peer evaluations. This evaluation strategy tends to result in higher grades as the process is collaborative; students are able to refine and/or expand their thought processes through group interaction. This evaluation procedure may be most effective, therefore, in contexts where competency based assessment is preferable to normative evaluation.

Summary

This networking evaluation model offers a creative alternative to traditional, static evaluation procedures. The students who participated in the networking evaluation experiences at CSUSB found this evaluation model to be a positive learning experience which motivated them to think, share knowledge, and be creative. Students who participated in this networking evaluation indicated that this evaluation procedure reduced their test anxiety, enabling them to have more confidence in themselves and perform effectively during the evaluation.

Networking evaluations are timely for students in teacher education programs and other programs offering training in helping professions such as counseling and social work. This evaluation model helps students learn how to effectively work with others, develop communication skills, and facilitate group decision making. Through the development of networking skills, students will be able to create communication that fosters understanding between people within their chosen profession. The evaluation process then becomes a learning experience.

References

Naisbitt, J. (1984). Megatrends. New York: Warner Books, Inc.